



## The Illinois Department of Corrections

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1301 Concordia Court, P.O. Box 19277 • Springfield, IL 62794-9277 • (217) 558-2200 TDD: (800) 526-0844

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Contact: Nicole Wilson  
[Nicole.J.Wilson@doc.illinois.gov](mailto:Nicole.J.Wilson@doc.illinois.gov)  
Marianne Manko  
[Marianne.Manko@illinois.gov](mailto:Marianne.Manko@illinois.gov)

### **IDOC and IDHS Partner to Improve Care for Mentally Ill Offenders**

(Springfield, IL) - The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) today announced a joint effort to enhance the delivery of services for IDOC offenders who have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness. The two state agencies entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016, which allows the IDOC to utilize a portion of the Elgin Mental Health Center (EMHC) as an inpatient mental health treatment facility.

The IGA satisfies a provision outlined in the Settlement Agreement reached in the *Rasho v. Baldwin* case, a class action lawsuit which lingered in the courts since 2007. Governor Rauner's commitment to improving the state's correctional system put the settlement of the case on a fast track and his administration worked with the IDOC legal team to reach a suitable agreement, avoiding costly litigation and the perpetual judicial oversight that would have resulted had the parties entered into a consent decree rather than this settlement.

The EMHC is currently a forensic hospital, serving patients who may have been found not-guilty of crimes by reason of insanity or those who were unfit to stand trial. The IDOC will transform the Jenks and Dix units at the EMHC into a secure mental health facility, where patients who have been committed to IDOC custody by the courts, will receive short-term, psychiatric care. The goal is to help stabilize seriously mentally ill offenders who are having difficulty coping in the prison environment, improve their correctional outcomes, and increase safety for all offenders, IDOC staff, and the citizens of Illinois.

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“This is the most fundamental change that the state of Illinois is undertaking to try to solve a serious problem in its prison system,” said IDOC Director John Baldwin. “Prisons were not designed to be mental health facilities but we must adjust to this reality. This new inpatient treatment program will allow us to provide focused care for seriously mentally ill offenders and help them deal with daily stressors of a prison environment.”

"This is a tremendous step forward for the State of Illinois," added IDHS Secretary James Dimas. "We are committed to working with the Illinois Department of Corrections to implement a new process, expanding treatment for offenders with serious mental illness. A focus on rehabilitation will help them adjust to their current situation while providing them with the tools necessary to establish lifelong stability once they are released."

The IDOC will be responsible for staffing the units, treating the offenders, and making necessary renovations to ensure the units meet security standards and mental health regulations. Forensic patients who are currently housed at the Jenks and Dix units will be relocated.

The Rasha v Baldwin Settlement Agreement, which was approved in May of 2016, also requires the Department to boost staffing levels, update its policies, ensure mental health professionals are included in disciplinary decisions for offenders on the mental health caseload, and bring four residential treatment units online at Dixon, Pontiac, and Logan Correctional Centers, and the former Illinois Youth Center in Joliet.

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